

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security

Hearing on
“An Examination of the Iranian Regime’s Threats to Homeland Security”

Prepared Statement of
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Chairman Green, Ranking Member Thompson, distinguished members of the committee.

Permit me to begin by thanking you for holding this hearing on Islamic Republic’s threats to Homeland Security and for the opportunity to testify before you.

Last month, I had the privilege to testify before a subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, on the Iranian regime's malignant actions and escalating threats. During that hearing, I emphasized the resilience of the Iranian people in resisting the oppressive clerical regime. The murder of Mahsa Amini, while in the custody for the crime of inappropriate hijab ignited massive protests. Tragically the regime brutality continues. Armita Geravand, a 16-year-old girl is in a coma and fighting for her life for refusing to wear the hijab in public.

The regime’s destructive nature extends beyond its own borders – Islamic Republic funds, trains and equips groups like Hamas and Hezbollah to carry out its lethal agenda. At least 30 Americans have been killed in the war started by Hamas. At least 200 are held as hostage, including at least 20 Americans. The Islamic Republic poses a substantial threat, not only to its regional neighbors but also to the United States, threatening Americans on our soil.

Appearing here today comes with its own perils. After my testimony last month, my organization endured a severe cyberattack from sources linked with the Islamic Republic. I have received death and kidnap threats. I am not alone, other Americans have also come under attack from the Iranian regime. This is not new; I have endured death threats from the Revolutionary Guards, Hezbollah and Taliban. And more recently, you can now add Hamas to the list after I publicly condemned the brutal attack on Israel.

Let me share just a bit about my personal experience. I was born in a traditional and religious family in northern Iran. My parents were poor farmers. Growing up, I was brainwashed at a young age, like thousands of other young children, to chant slogans like death to Israel and death to America. As a teenager, my political activism landed

me in jail. Much later on as a journalist, I was often critical of the government, and was forced to leave my birth country in 2009, during the Green protests. I started my second life in my adopted country, the United States which allowed me to flourish as a journalist, an author, a women's rights activist and a vocal critic of the Islamic Republic.

As an American citizen I don't feel safe in my home. My family doesn't feel safe. Since 2021, I have been forced to relocate over a dozen times, under the supervision of the FBI. Two years ago, Iranian intelligence operatives were plotting to kidnap me and take me from Brooklyn via a speedboat to a cargo ship bound for Venezuela and then to Iran. The constant need to move without knowing the exact nature of the dangers, brought great hardships on myself, my husband and my step children. We all had to pretend to live a normal life while constantly on the move.

I have come to realize that "being safe" is a luxury. Even after the Department of Justice exposed the kidnap plot, my life didn't return to normal. On two separate occasions, special FBI units whisked my family back into safe locations after receiving notice of credible and serious threats. There is no escaping the fact that the Iranian regime had put a target on my back and I had to accept my new circumstances. As one agent told me, Iranian regime is persistent and will try again and again.

This reality again struck home last July when a man armed with AK-47 came to my house in Brooklyn to kill me on direct orders from the Islamic Republic. The assassin, a member of an East European criminal gang had been stalking me for days, waiting outside my home and monitoring my activities and those of my family, neighbors, and friends.

The incident marked the second serious attempt on my life in America, precisely 12 months after the kidnap plot.

Again, I was forced to abandon my Brooklyn home and leave behind my friends and neighbors in exchange for a series of temporary locations. Today, the three assassins are behind bars awaiting trial but I am forced to take elaborate precautions whenever I'm in public. But I am not alone in not feeling safe. Other Iranian American dissidents, and former officials, also feel unsafe. I'm still shocked that the Iranian regime is threatening us in our own homes with impunity.

It is not just physical threat. The Iranian regime has engaged in election interfering in the past and will exploit the war in Gaza to spread disinformation and hate speech on our campuses and on social media.

I am grateful to members of Congress who passed the Masih Alinejad Hunt Law in response to the kidnapping plot.

However, the administration's response has been inadequate. By not holding the regime accountable, the administration appears weak in the face of Iranian aggression. The White House is treating these plots on our soil as criminal matters, to be treated by the Justice Department. I beg to differ. These plots against Americans are national security

threats. This issue extends beyond me and other dissidents; the Revolutionary Guards have threatened former government officials, including former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, and former National Security Advisor John Bolton. These threats against Americans on US soil are nothing short of a declaration of war.

Instead of holding the Iranian regime accountable, the administration prefers my silence. In the aftermath of the assassination plot, no senior administration official has ever reached out to meet me, or other Iranian-Americans facing these threats. The White House warned me earlier this year that there have been more than 31 credible threats against me on US soil, but their advice was to strongly suggest that I enter into witness protection.

Witness protection would entail changing my name, social security number, identity and be silent and disappear. This is precisely what the Islamic Republic wants. To be silenced is not an option for me.

The administration has a responsibility to combat terror and protect American lives. The administration should never have approved to release \$6 billion in exchange for five hostages wrongfully held. We should permanently stop Islamic Republic from accessing those funds, which will be used to bring more terror to people of Israel and here in the United States.

It is time to confront the reality that after more than four decades in power, the character of the Islamic Republic is unlikely to change. Hamas's attack on Israel should serve as a wakeup call. It is important for the White House to acknowledge the threats posed by Iranian regime as national security threats.

We need to find ways to stop Iranian agents from spreading disinformation, and from turning our freedoms against us. Family members of regime officials work and travel freely in the United States but their loyalty is with the Islamic Republic.

Finally, I ask that a dedicated office to be set up at the appropriate law enforcement agency to monitor Iranian threats on our homeland and protect Americans from the physical and cyber reach of Iranian regime. That would be a start for Americans to feel safe at home. We need to find ways to help Americans who are not government officials but are targeted by the Iranian regime.

Thank you for holding a hearing on this important topic, and your bipartisan commitment to safeguarding our country. I look forward to answering your questions.